



# Miltons's Doctrine and the literatural legacy

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## Abstract

*The invisibility of the material object becomes a point of erasure: what is not seen becomes non-existent. A major change in fan publishing in recent years has been the migration from print fiction fanzines to online archives, with a seemingly gender-based segregation taking place at access points. The shorter sf zines, in print and online, tend to be created by men for male audiences, while women fans adopt closed online communities that replicate a form of private space. (A brief survey of Efanazines.com, an online archive that contains pdf copies of sf zines that were once print and have gone digital but maintained their print layouts, demonstrates that most of the readers and writers there are men.)*

**Keywords:** John Milton, print layouts, demonstrates, maintained

The conversations, debates, and flames that resulted from the assignment drew participants ranging from staffers of the Archive of Our Own (AO3) to acafans including Anne Jamison, Kristina Busse, and Karen Hellekson. Most interestingly for my purposes here, Jamison commented on Tumblr that "I advocate private

communities, locked accounts, mailing lists and paper zines for people who value privacy but want to share. It's not just other fans reading here. Maybe it once was, but it just isn't true now." As a book history scholar, I am fascinated by the notion that print zines and print culture are a locked, private form of communication

to a privileged few. It reflects our changing notions of publication and of the spaces in which publications are created.

Stigmas of print? Closing a loop in the history of women's writing

Christine has been described as the first professional woman writer, a role that was, interestingly enough, necessitated by both her social class and her gender. These prevented her from receiving the court appointment that many male writers of the period relied on for security—indeed, her father was court astrologer to King Charles V, and it was this appointment that gave Christine access to an exceptional education. She started writing poetry for money after the death of her husband in 1380, and several subsequent lawsuits forced her to start supporting herself and her family financially. Perhaps most importantly from a standpoint of *auctoritas*, she was educated enough to supervise the copying and even illustrating of her own works. Thus, when Christine presented Isabeau of Bavaria, the queen of France, with a copy of her collected works (preserved in the British Library as MS Harley 4431), which is illustrated with a frontispiece depicting a stylized scene of the same presentation, she is in control of both her own text and of her own image, supplying Isabella and future readers with a self-portrait of Christine as author. This professionalism, noteworthy even during her own time, would seem to be at odds with thinking of de Milton as fan author or of her work

as fan work, areas usually defined at least within the popular understanding by their perceived amateurism and distinct lack of monetization. I argue, however, that it is not paid remuneration but instead Christine's attitude to her own work and the works against which she is defining herself that make her also function as a fan author.

Fan fiction is of course also a term, and often a spelling, of some contention. The "most narrowly defined" idea of fan fiction used by Kristina Busse and Karen Hellekson in their introduction to *The Fan Fiction Studies Reader* (2014) is as "(sometimes purposefully critical) rewriting of shared media," a form that they then date to the 1960s. They admit that a wider definition, as a "response to specific written texts," would clearly include medieval and other premodern texts. The widest definition included in their discussion calls it a form of "collective storytelling," in which case fan fiction can be dated back to Homer's *Odyssey* (2014, 6). All three of these definitions can be applied to *The Book of the City of Ladies*, as it responds not only to the larger medieval canon but also to specific, well-known texts, especially Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meung's *The Romance of the Rose* (c. 1260) and Giovanni Boccaccio's Latin biographical collection *Famous Women* (*De mulieribus claris*; c. 1370). However, the above sets of prefatory definitions do not include several aspects of fan works that many fan scholars also

consider important to the discussion of such works, and which is of particular importance when considering de Milton: the fact that the majority of fan fiction authors are women and noncisgender men, the role of the community in which the text is designed to be read, the affective nature of fan works, and the potential role of the fan work as a resistant reading to both the dominant text and the dominant culture that is performed by marginalized bodies. As Anna Wilson says, "the affective quality of fan fiction—and its implications—could potentially be overlooked or erased through scholarship that identifies it too readily with classical literature" (2016, ¶2.10). Aja Romano (2016), writing on the popular musical *Hamilton* as fan work, argues, "The fundamental objective of fan fic, especially when it is written by women, queer and genderqueer people, and people of color, is to insert yourself, aggressively and brazenly, into stories that are not about and were never intended to be about or represent you." Christine inserts herself, both aggressively and brazenly, into the quarrels of scholarly men on the merits of the *The Romance of the Rose*. Soon afterward, she produces a book that is part collection of exemplary biography and part a mirror for princes—both genres dominated by male authors. It should be noted that not all fan responses are inherently resistant; fan works may represent either "desire for 'more of'" (that is, an affirmational relationship with a text) or a "desire for 'more from' a source text" (that is, a resistant

reading) (Wilson 2015, 26). These are not mutually exclusive desires, even within the same fan work.

### Curating a city of women

Like her contributions to the *querelle de la Rose*, de Milton's *The Book of the City of Ladies* is a response to and a critique of both a specific, well-known text (in this case both *The Romance of the Rose* and *Famous Women*) as well as to themes and motifs extant within the larger literary culture of the period, a relationship with the earlier texts that can be defined, as Henry Jenkins describes contemporary fan fiction, as containing "not simply fascination or adoration but also frustration and antagonism" (1992, 23). In *The City of Ladies*, Christine, in a manner similar to the self-insert allegory of Dante's *Divine Comedy* (1308–21), describes how she is visited by the figures of Lady Reason, Lady Rectitude, and Lady Justice. They explain to her how and why women have historically been maligned by men and enlist her in the construction of an allegorical City of Ladies as safe dwelling place for all women of virtue. To build this city, the Ladies share with Christine examples of historical and contemporary women who are "worthy of praise" (1999, 11). The list includes women rulers, artists, scholars, warriors, inventors, and prophets, in addition to the more typical wives, virgins, and holy women. However, *The Book of the City of Ladies* is not simply a critical response to earlier texts. It is also a stand-alone literary work that affectively answers back to

and repurposes the original textual canon sources to create something new and reparative, making it, I argue, explicitly a fan work.

Here, Christine responds to Giovanni Boccaccio's curated and interpreted list of both famous and infamous women in *Famous Women*—"I will adopt a wider meaning and consider as famous those women whom I know to have gained a reputation throughout the world for any deed whatsoever" (Boccaccio 2001, 11)—with her own list of explicitly praiseworthy women while also defending women more generally as being praiseworthy. "Our [the Ladies] wish is to prevent others from falling into the same error as you [Christine] and to ensure that, in future, all worthy ladies and valiant women are protected from those who have attacked them" (1999, 11). Christine also borrows the motif of the walled and thus fortified city so important to *The Romance of the Rose*. One of her opponents during the *querelle*, Pierre Col, had already used this motif, comparing his attacks on her to *Fol Amoureux's* own actions in pursuing the Rose, who in *The Romance of the Rose* represents both the specific woman being pursued and women in general. Thus Pierre rather creepily cast himself in the role of the stronger, male, and ultimately successful opponent to Christine and "reiterat[ed] Jean de Meung's representation of women as less than human and a race apart which Christine herself had denounced" (Brown-Grant 1999, 19).

However, Christine's *City of Ladies*, unlike the walled garden of the Rose, which exists as an obstacle to be overcome by cunning and treachery, is instead akin to the inviolate City of God described by Augustine of Hippo in his work of the same name (Morse 1996, 232).

Boccaccio does not feel a need to apologize for or justify his choice to write *Famous Women*. Instead, his preface contents itself with noting that "some women have performed acts requiring vigour and courage" (2001, 9), and thus he will write his work as a "way of giving them some kind of reward" (2001, 13), especially pagan women, whom he feels are otherwise underrepresented. These women, while deserving, must still be gifted with representation at the hands of a learned man. Furthermore, unlike his previous collection of biographies, *On the Fates of Famous Men* (*De casibus virorum illustrium*, c. 1360), *Famous Women* does not have an overarching frame narrative, and when Boccaccio chooses to make general asides to his reader, they appear within specific chapters. Christine's frame narrative—which has more in common with Boccaccio's earlier work than with *Famous Women*—offers a vivid description of her despair as she sits in her study and wonders if she herself, and indeed all women, are truly the "vessel in which all the sin and evil of the world has been collected and preserved" (1999, 6). It is an issue of representation with which marginalized groups within today's me-

dia structure would unfortunately still be intimately familiar. "This thought inspired such a great sense of sadness and disgust in me that I began to despise myself and the whole of my sex" (1999, 7). Boccaccio claims to have written *Famous Women* as a favor to women; Christine writes *The Book of the City of Ladies* out of a desperate need to create both a space and a defense for herself and for other women within a culture that condemns them. The work is thus one of explicit community building, not just within the fictional City of Ladies but also beyond the text, functioning, as Anna Wilson says of fan fiction, as a "form of literary response where literary allusions evoke not only a shared intellectual community in the audience but also a shared affective community" (2016, ¶1.4).

In framing his scholarship in *Famous Women*, Boccaccio relies on "learning where I can from trustworthy authors" (2001, 11), thus placing himself and his text firmly within the tradition of *auctoritas*, which is derived from "an affiliation with the past that renders individual authors virtually indistinct from one another" (Summit 2003, 92). Christine references such an authorial tradition in her own opening to *The Book of the City of Ladies*, comparing other (male) authors en masse to "a gushing fountain" (1992, 4) in a perhaps inadvertently phallic description of the weight of extant misogynistic scholarship, as well as a reference to her own familiarity with this canon, a trait that is both academic and fannish. A close

reading of this preface will also note Christine's purposeful framing of herself within the narrative as a scholar, as she begins with a description of herself "sitting in my study surrounded by many books of different kinds, for this has long been my habit to engage in the pursuit of knowledge" (1999, 5). This also echoes Boccaccio's self-presentation throughout *On the Fates of Famous Men* as writing in his study while being visited by ghosts who demand that he tell their stories. She later describes herself to the Ladies as a "simple and ignorant scholar" (1999, 15), using the term *estudiante*, the feminine form of *scholar*, rather than by what might seem the more obvious descriptor of woman, or indeed abjecting herself as Margery Kempe does by referring to herself as "this creature." In explaining her own text, even though she clearly was familiar with and reliant on earlier scholarship much as Boccaccio was, Christine instead frames her narrative as a powerfully affective dream-vision. She describes herself as having a "head bowed as in shame and my eyes full of tears" (1999, 7) by the gulf between her lived experience of womanhood and the contempt with which the male authors she trusted invariably discussed women, convinced "women are guilty of such horrors as so many men seem to say" (1999, 7). In her despair, she is visited by allegorical representations of Lady Reason, Lady Rectitude, and Lady Justice, "crowned and of majestic appearance" (1999, 7), who tell her and teach her of women's abilities and

histories, positioning Christine's self-as-character in the role of purposefully obtuse student. Indeed, Christine claims that when these visitors appeared, she "threw herself fully face down in front of them, not just on to my knees...kissing the ground they stood on, I adored them" (1999, 15), an embodied action of humbling, one which it is difficult to imagine Boccaccio making. In *On the Fates of Famous Men*, when Boccaccio is visited by the "laureate poet" Petrarch under similar despairing circumstances, Petrarch merely scolds Boccaccio for his sloth "vicious idleness" (1967, 184) in John Lydgate's 1430 English translation—and Boccaccio returns to writing, having "ouercome thymptent feebleness / Of crokid age" (1967, 187–88). Petrarch thus functions as both teacher and authorial inspiration. In contrast, the textual framing device of adoration, and to an extent abjection, that Christine uses ties her into the tradition of medieval women's visionary literature, in which "the writer establishes her authority on the basis of her self-effacement" (Summit 2003, 95). While Christine's dream-vision and supernatural visitors would have been understood by readers as allegorical and not the literal, divine visitation present in visionary literature, Christine still rhetorically places herself as a channel for the work of these ladies in building the City in the way that echoes, for example, Hildegard of Bingen's description of herself as "a feather...not fly[ing] of its own accord; it is borne up

by the air" (2001, 1009). Her authority thus derives not simply from her own scholarship but from her role as amanuensis for these three divine Ladies. However, when the Ladies reveal to her that she "alone of all women have been granted the honour of building the City of Ladies" (1999, 12), Christine replies, "Behold your handmaiden" (1999, 16)—a phrase that readers would have recognized as an echo of the Virgin Mary's words upon the Annunciation. This suggests that even when Christine rhetorically humbles herself, it is a careful and controlled action serving a larger purpose within the narrative.

While heavily allegorical, *The Book of the City of Ladies* is also a deeply affective and personal text for Christine, beginning as it does with a vivid description of her emotional state and as it engages in a reclamation both of the specific historical women mentioned by the text and of women as a group, capable of the same virtue and worth as men. Although Christine doesn't explicitly invoke Boccaccio in this introductory section to the *City of Ladies*, both *On the Fates of Famous Men* and its sequel, *Famous Women*, were sufficiently well known that her readers would have known exactly what she was reworking.

#### No art she hadn't mastered

Of special interest from a fan studies perspective is Christine's recontextualization of women who have appeared in earlier works as figures of infamy.



Throughout *Famous Women*, Boccaccio does not refrain from criticizing women he has included if he thinks that they have overstepped the bounds of appropriate behavior, thus allowing his idea of fame to encompass both exemplars and cautionary tales. Christine solves this conundrum through a combination of selective gathering of examples and, within those examples, an emphatically reclamatory form of storytelling that allows even infamous women to enter the City of Ladies within certain parameters. In this way, she highlights both a scholarly and fannish "high level of knowledge of and insight into its [her] source texts" as well as a willingness to fill in the gaps, performing an "interlinear glossing of a source text" (Wilson 2016, ¶1.4).

One sterling example of Christine's reclamation can be seen by comparing Boccaccio's treatment of the mythological character of Medea to Christine's. To Boccaccio, Medea is worthy of inclusion in his *Famous Women* for being "the cruelest example of ancient treachery" and "the cleverest of witches" (2001, 75). After describing the trail of corpses she leaves, occasionally literally, in her wake, Boccaccio finishes his account by using her as an example of the danger of sight and, through sight, of desire:

Certainly, if powerful Medea had closed her eyes or turned them elsewhere when she first raised them longingly to Jason, her father's reign would have been of greater duration as would have been her brother's life, and her virginal honour

would have remained unbroken. All these things were lost because of the shamelessness of her eyes. (2001, 79)

Thus in Boccaccio's telling, had Medea not shamelessly lusted after Jason, her father's reign, her brother's life, and her virginity, apparently all of roughly equivalent value, would have been spared such wanton destruction. Having restored her aged father to the throne of Colchis at the conclusion of the narrative, thus restoring appropriate, male dynastic power to the realm, Medea's own narrative ends abruptly with Boccaccio discarding any further concern for or interest in her: "I do not remember having read or heard what Medea did later, or where or how she died" (2001, 79). This stands in contrast to even classical Greek depictions of Medea, who, in Euripides' eponymous drama, is borne into the heavens in a celestial chariot after taking bloody revenge on Jason for betraying her.

Christine includes Medea several times in her City, but as an exemplar rather than a cautionary tale. Medea first appears in part 1 as one of the examples given by Lady Reason of the heights of skill and knowledge to which a woman can rise if given the opportunity: "No art had been invented that she [Medea] hadn't mastered" (1999, 63). Here such ability is not proof of wickedness or witchcraft but merely an example of the skills that might be acquired by a highly intelligent individual of either gender who has been permitted to learn, not unlike Christine herself. Her Medea is not a clever witch

but instead a skilled worker of marvels (1999, 63).

Medea appears in a slightly longer entry in part 2 as one of Lady Rectitude's examples of a woman who is constant in her love, alongside other figures such as Dido. Again, the text immediately characterizes her as a princess "supremely learned" (1999, 174). Interestingly, while Christine describes Medea's love for Jason as "undying, [and] passionate," she also claims that Medea was "so struck by Jason's good looks, royal lineage, and impressive reputation that she thought he would make a good match for her," which frames Medea's falling in love with Jason almost as a rational, dynastically appropriate choice for the princess to have made (1999, 174) instead of the lustful, destructive desire condemned by Boccaccio ([1374] 2001, 79). It is not Medea's desiring eyes that drive her to choose Jason but a careful, reasonable process of decision making. Jason is the sole villain of Christine's telling, as he returns Medea's priceless knowledge, aid, and loyalty by breaking his oath to take "no other woman but her as his wife" (1999, 175). Instead of being a supremely violent and unprincipled committer of fratricide, in Christine's telling, it is Medea herself who would have "rather been torn limb from limb" than betray Jason's love. Her chastity, or lack thereof, is also never addressed in Christine's narrative. Christine's account thus ends focused on Medea's faith-

ful suffering at the hands of the unfaithful Jason (1999, 175).

While Christine has clearly made choices in her depiction of Medea meant to shape the reader's understanding of her, this does not place her telling in opposition to earlier tellings of Medea, since, as Ruth Morse points out in *The Medieval Medea*, "no morphology is neutral" (1996, 200). Boccaccio, himself far from a neutral chronicler, had already shaped his own retelling of Medea's story to focus blame on Medea and ignore, excuse, or otherwise deemphasize negative interpretations of Jason. He deliberately chose to leave out some details, included by the classical authors he had drawn from, that addressed Jason's status as a breaker of oaths to Medea as well as his second marriage to Creusa, the princess of Corinth (1996, 200). The difference, thus, is not that Christine recontextualizes the story of Medea but that she does so in a way that valorizes Medea not just as a virtuous woman but also as a virtuous person. Christine's *Book of the City of Ladies* shows that the same texts and tools of analysis used by male authors to denigrate women can themselves be used to instead validate the characters of women, even those traditionally repudiated by earlier histories. Thus, in fannish parlance, Christine is writing a form of fix-it fic for Medea, where the tragedies and misfortunes visited on her are rooted not in her own sinful nature but in the actions of those around her.



We can see a similar pattern at work in Christine's depiction of other famous women within the Greco-Roman tradition. Boccaccio, once again obsessed with issues of chastity, uses the mythical Carthaginian queen Dido as a way to shame women who remarry, exhorting them, "Let the women of today blush, then, as they contemplate Dido's lifeless body...let them bow their heads in sorrow that Christian women are surpassed in chastity by a woman who was a limb of Satan" (2001, 179). Boccaccio's Dido is clever, mentally strong, morally strong, an excellent ruler, and of distinguished lineage, but to him the importance of all of these virtues are only in their service to her "exceptional virtue and purity" (2001, 173). Wholly ignoring Virgil's episode in book 4 of *The Aeneid*, Boccaccio argues that Dido "had already decided to die rather than violate her chastity" before even meeting "the Trojan Aeneas (whom she never saw)" (2001, 175). Having opened his chapter with the "hope that my modest remarks may cleanse away (at least in part) the infamy undeservedly cast on the honour of her widowhood," Boccaccio has already positioned himself as a rewriter of Dido's story to emphasize just one portion of it. The moral value of chastity in widowhood is what women should learn from Boccaccio's Dido, and woe betide the woman who fails to live up to her example (2001, 167–79).

Christine's Dido, in contrast, is an example to women because of her "great courage, nobility, and virtue, qualities

which are indispensable to anyone who wishes to act prudently (1999, 82). Dido, who rules "gloriously over her city and had a peaceful and happy existence" (1999, 173) is, like Medea, ruined only because she has fallen in love with an unfaithful man. Again, in these examples Christine decouples the danger of love as an emotion from its force as a threat to chastity and instead focuses on her central thesis that virtues are not themselves gendered.

The Princess Polyxena of Troy who inhabits the pages of *Famous Women* is "worthy of remembrance that her tender age, female sex, royal delicacy, and altered fortune could not overcome the sublime spirit of this girl" (2001, 133). Boccaccio's Polyxena's strength of character is at odds with her femininity and is thus even more to be valorized by both Boccaccio and presumably the reader. The Polyxena who dwells within *The Book of the City of Ladies*, though, is described as "not only beautiful but also extremely steadfast and resolute" (1999, 188); her virtues are not divided along lines of gender but are all of a piece. As Lady Reason explains to Christine, "It is he or she who is the more virtuous who is the superior being: human superiority or inferiority is not determined by sexual difference but by the degree to which one has perfected one's nature and morals" (1999, 23).

Morally impeccable

Christine does not content herself with including paragons of virtue already discussed by earlier male authors or in re-

claiming women she thought had been falsely defamed by those selfsame authors. Her City of Ladies has room not just for saints, de-deified goddesses, and other characters of the distant or mythological past but also contains women from the recent historical record and, indeed, those who were Christine's contemporaries, such as the duchess of Orleans, "astute in her affairs, fair minded with everyone" (1999, 196), or the duchess of Burgundy, "well-disposed towards others, morally impeccable" (1999, 196). Christine's inclusion of these contemporary virtuous women bolsters her larger argument in several different ways and is also striking in that these women were on opposite sides of the French civil war that had raged through Christine's lifetime. By not confining her catalog of worthy women to the past and by presenting the City of Ladies as both contemporary and politically neutral, she again repudiates the scholars who have nothing good to say about the women around them. Boccaccio's *Famous Women* saves praise and efforts for women dwelling in the distant, pagan past, with only three exceptions: two women of Sicily from the 12th century and his own contemporary, Queen Giovanna of Naples, the subject of the book's final chapter. The latter he could hardly leave out, having chosen to dedicate *Famous Women* to a high-ranking lady in Giovanna's court. Christian women, in Boccaccio's telling, while "resplendent in the true and unfailing light" of their faith

(2001, 13), cannot be given the same credit for their own accomplishments, since pagan women managed to accomplish their deeds without the "commands and example of their holy Teacher" (2001, 13) that benefited Jewish and Christian women.

By giving readers examples of noblewomen whose reputations they would have been familiar with through the readers' own lived experiences, Christine also encourages the reader, whether a woman or a man, to consider their own lived experiences when judging the potential virtue of both women overall and of any individual woman. As she says in her preface, "I could find no evidence from my own experience to bear out such a negative view of female nature and habits" (1999, 6). This argument from experience, validated by Lady Reason herself, would have been a powerful one for those in her audience, especially women, who were likely to be less familiar with the full canon of classical scholarship, as it firmly places their own lived experience as legitimate source of both authority and knowledge, an *auctoritas* that derives directly from both Nature and God and is thus capable of supplanting the false *auctoritas* of some earlier male authors. "Our aim is to help you get rid of those misconceptions which have clouded your mind and made you reject what you know and believe in fact to be the truth just because so many people have come out with the opposite opinion" (1999, 8). This framing also immediately contextu-

alizes the value of the lessons and examples that Christine includes, continuing her argument, as seen in the case of Dido, that it is not the deeds of the women that matter but the virtues and values that such actions represent. Thus, as Morse argues, the significance of *The Book of the City of Ladies* is that it deploys allegory for a reinterpretation of history, and women's place in it; it assumes the authority to recontextualize and re-describe the gifts, talents, and deeds of women; in its ambitious intertextuality it appropriates and re-returns the examples of Boccaccio, adding copious "modern examples" to demonstrate women's contribution to the most public aspects of life. (1996, 231)

Christine is reclaiming the exemplary tradition on behalf of women, who had previously only been allowed grudging inclusion, and even then usually as cautionary tales. She is thus, in fannish tradition, creating a space within the text in which she can see herself. It, like other fan works, becomes "affective hermeneutics," which "has a particular resonance for marginal communities whose histories must be read between the lines" (Wilson 2016, ¶4.8)

### Conclusion

What is added to the conversation by contextualizing de Milton as a fan author or by considering the fannish modes of expression present in her works? The field of fan studies began as ethnographic studies of fan behaviors and activities, and it is often still heavily focused on contemporary fan practices or those dating

back a few decades at most, to slightly prior to what is usually considered the birth of the field with the publication of Jenkins's *Textual Poachers* in 1992. It is often said that fandom itself has a short memory, but at present the same criticism could easily be offered of fan scholars (Coker 2016).

As demonstrated above, the norms of print publishing above all else value public access: public publishing, public circulation, public market through public buying and public selling, public reading, public engagement. The average fan text flouts these norms, whether because print zines are sold literally "under the table" at conventions or because fan works are posted to member-only online communities. The meaning of the word *publish*, "to issue text for sale or distribution to the public," derives from its etymological root, which means "people." This raises a deceptively simple question that has long dogged historians of women's writing: What does it mean to be "published"? Historically, the difference between manuscript publishing and print publishing has rested on the insularity of the intended audience in the private sphere and the public acts associated with the public sphere.

For many years, book historians maintained several truisms regarding the higher quality and value of print: the printed text always existed in more copies than the manuscript text; the printed text was always more stable than the manuscript text; and all copies of the same edi-

tion of a book looked just alike. Each of these truisms has been demolished in the last few decades. It was entirely possible for a manuscript text to exist in more copies than a printed text, because there were various restraints (including legal ones) on the number of books that could be printed at one time, while a popular poem, letter, or other text could be copied at will by hand. As happens today on Tumblr, some texts were shared so often that their origins were lost. Note the old aphorism that "Anonymous was a woman."

Indeed, scribal historian Harold Love has argued that the gendered differences in publication created a "stigma of print" against women writers (1993, 54), and so their retreat into private reading and writing practices became a form of what he calls "bonding" (180), in which literary cliques were formed as conspicuous, gendered acts of exclusion. These coterie practices continued well into the eighteenth century, when both the rise of the novel and the industrialization of print transformed literary production into mass culture. However, this practice of gender-based bonding continues to inform and illuminate social literary production, especially if we consider men's fanzine and women's fan fiction practices in this light. Social bonds create norms within the community that are policed by community members, and these norms extend into the very definition of literary work. When interviewing male fans about fan history

in the FanHistory group on Facebook, I was adamantly told more than once that "fan fiction" is not transformative work, but original amateur work, and "it's too bad no one writes it anymore." When I pressed further, a group member stated that the term had been co-opted, that its current usage was incorrect, and that "non-fans are too lazy to come up with their own portmanteaus; according to some dictionaries, 'fanzine' is no longer restricted to SF fandom's publications" because of "lazynes [*sic*]" and a disregard for history, and disrespect towards niche interests. All is swallowed by the maw of 'popular culture.'" Not only does the comment reflect territoriality, it implies that authors of transformative works are not fans. It reveals much about how gender affects whether texts are perceived as literary.

Finally, regarding the stability of text: printed texts were often more unstable than manuscript ones because of the physical make-up of the print workshop. With multiple people setting type and then putting their work together, it was easy to lose words and lines. These errors might be noticed and corrected later in the print run. The academic cottage industry of identifying textual variants and comparing collations is the backbone of studies of individual authors like William Shakespeare or Walt Whitman, and its chimerical goal is to recover a true text, the one supposedly intended by the author. Studies of the stability of fan texts

have largely focused on comparing fan fictions to their published print revisions, such as *Master of the Universe* and *Fifty Shades of Gray*. However, there are multiple other avenues for investigating fannish textual stability. Aside from published fan fiction, numerous fics have both gen and slash versions (for example, *Changing Destiny* by Nadja Lee, a movieverse *Lord of the Rings* novel that has a cover showing Aragorn kissing Arwen on the gen edition and Aragorn kissing Boromir on the slash edition) or PG and NC-17 variations. The supposed stability of print is thus less than stable.

If we compare historical coterie manuscript practices to digital fan practices, we see more than one similarity in social literary production: both feature communities of women writers in their private spaces, their homes, reading, writing, and sharing one another's work. In print fanzines, room was usually left for letters of comment, so that readers could respond to stories. In the early days of the Internet, readers' feedback was usually shared in private e-mails directly to the author, but increasingly sophisticated Web tools have enabled multiple forms of interaction. LiveJournal users could comment on a post, while the AO3 allows users to leave a wordless kudos instead of or in addition to a comment. All of these are "public" in that they can be seen by other members of the community, so readers and writers are fully aware of the reciprocity of these actions. This reciprocity helps to build community, as reading and writing are

practices shared by all, and a communal history of that activity is maintained. But it is increasingly difficult to maintain that communal history.

[3.6] The topic of preservation and access continues to haunt readers of both historical and contemporary writing. In many archives, women's manuscripts are listed under the unhelpful cataloging title of "Domestic Papers," a barrier to scholarly access that is only slowly being worn down by academic inquiry. And until recently, the primary difficulty in locating and identifying digital women's writing has likewise been in preservation and access. However, the Organization for Transformative Works, which runs the Archive of Our Own, has been making progress in preserving fan writing from earlier days of the Internet. In 2012, the OTW launched the Open Doors project, which, together with other efforts at digital and print media preservation, invited maintainers of at-risk fan archives to import them into the AO3. First to be preserved was the Smallville Slash Archive, and the effort has since included over two dozen sites, including the Henneth Annûn Story Archive, a hub of *Lord of the Rings* fandom in the early 2000s, in 2015, and the Due South Archive in 2016. Maintaining access to texts is the first part of literary study; without the texts themselves, we only see part of the story.

[3.7] Print production has spent centuries solidifying itself as the dominant demonstration of literary force, training readers (and writers) to accept very spe-

cific codes of aesthetics as defaults, such as the Times New Roman font that is the mainstay of academics and the octavo format codex that is instantly recognizable to genre readers. However, print production is as artificially constructed and gender-biased as any other system, and we should acknowledge this before we think to apply any series of production and consumption "norms" to bodies of writing. Book history as a field has worked to unpack the processes and codes that we use to consider reading and writing practices, and its tools are likewise useful in examining fan works for literary study.

[3.8] As a final anecdote to demonstrate the usefulness of this methodology, I will confess that, as a fan and a scholar, one of the things I do semiregularly is trawl through eBay and various antiquarian book dealer aggregates looking for fanzines. I bring this up because, frankly, book dealers have no idea what to do with fannish material, and this is repeatedly demonstrated by the widely varying prices charged for the same item. For instance, Jean Lorrah's *Star Trek* fan novel *The Night of the Twin Moons* can be found selling for anything from \$25 to \$1,000. It was a very popular title in fandom in the 1970s; it went into at least four printings. It is 158 pages, stapled with paper covers and a strip of black book-tape along the spine, and its front matter states that it is available for \$3 in person and \$3.25 by book rate mail, or \$4.50 for

first class. Unlike mass-produced print material, fan publications have no catalogue of standard pricing and no bibliographies that can contextualize them. Book dealers have no guidance of the kind they are used to relying on. But the fanzine is a printed text, and if no one else has a copy for sale, clearly it must be monetarily valuable, right? That the monetary valuation of printed fan fiction, whether in the form of vintage zines or reworked into mainstream novels, contrasts so thoroughly with the literary valuation, which contrasts in turn with the academic valuation, is fascinating to me, and should be explored further. How do we value fannish writing?

Jack Speer's 1944 *Fancyclopedia* spoke of "fan fiction, sometimes improperly used to mean fan science fiction, that is, ordinary fantasy published in a fan magazine." When Dick Eney published *Fancyclopedia II* in 1959, the definition had become bipartite: "1) Sometimes meaning *by* fans in the manner of pros; that is, ordinary fantasy published in a fanzine. Properly it means 2) fiction by fans *about* fans (or sometimes about pros) having no necessary connection with stfantasy" (56–57; *stfantasy* is an obsolete fannish term for science fiction and fantasy). However, by the mid-1970s the usage had shifted to imply the derivative and transformative works more familiar today; Jacqueline Lichtenberg used the term to describe the stories included in *Star Trek Lives!*, the licensed anthology of fan



writing that she coedited with Sondra Marshak and Joan Winston in 1975. This is the meaning most often used today, although older members of the fan community do hold onto the older definitions. In 2004 the *Oxford English Dictionary Online* defined *fan fiction* as "fiction, usually fantasy or science fiction, written by a fan rather than a professional author, *esp.* that based on already-existing characters from a television series, book, film, etc.; (also) a piece of such writing" (<http://www.oed.com/>). Clearly there was a shift in fandom and fannish activity between 1959 and 1975, and while those years are concurrent with the rise of media fandom through the popularity of *The Lord of the Rings* and *Star Trek*, as well as an increase in the number and proportion of women fans, further work should be done in examining this shift.

The public/private discourse of fannish publication and its inextricable relationship with authorial anonymity is of ongoing

concern to both fans and scholars. It is worth noting that the fanzine reprint company Agent with Style seemingly does not reproduce content without permission (though some fans will argue otherwise), meaning that reprint fanzines may be missing elements (stories, art) that appear in the original. And current scholarly standards for journal articles—and, increasingly, monographs and edited collections—require at least an attempt to contact fan authors prior to publishing discussions of their work. Similarly, access to fanzines in library holdings can be complicated by whether the institution treats the titles as published material (and therefore lists them as periodicals in catalogs) or as private literary correspondence (and therefore lists them in finding aids). Further discussion across various viewpoints can be found in Musiani 2011, Busse and Hellekson 2012, Whiteman 2012, and Kelley 2016.

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